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PARIS FOR ARS DWINTON  
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LSMALLS, DOJ/OPDAT JSILVERWOOD, DOJ/ICITAP LBECKER

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SUBJECT: BENIN: WJEI ORGANIZES TRAINING FOR MAGISTRATES, JUDICIAL POLICE OFFICERS, AND PUBLIC SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS ON COMBATTING VIOLENCE AGAINST SCHOOLGIRLS.

**¶1. SUMMARY:** As part of the Women's Justice and Empowerment Initiative (WJEI), DOJ/OPDAT AND DOJ/ICITAP organized a weeklong training for twenty magistrates, twenty judicial police officers, and ten public school administrators on how to combat violence against children, particularly sexual violence against schoolgirls. The training was organized in conjunction with the French Embassy, UNICEF, the NGO Plan Benin, and the Beninese Justice Ministry. END SUMMARY.

**¶2. DATE OF ACTIVITY:** November 2 - 6, 2009.

**¶3. PROGRAM JUSTIFICATION/OBJECTIVES:** Sexual violence against schoolgirls is a significant problem in Benin. Making matters worse, the authors of these sexual assaults are often the girls' teachers themselves. It is a common practice in Benin that once a girl reaches puberty her male teacher will solicit her for sex, promising her good grades if she agrees. Less common, but not infrequent, is the situation where a male teacher dispenses with solicitation and bribery, and simply forcibly rapes a female student. Because of the frequency of this practice, and because of the teachers' elevated social status, they are rarely punished, either internally by the Education Ministry, or externally by the justice system. The objective of this training was first to sensitize the audience that even though sex between a teacher and his minor student is a common practice in Benin, that it is wrong and against the law. Additionally, the training sought to teach the different parties how to investigate and prosecute allegations of violence in schools and how to cooperate during such an investigation.

**¶4. AUDIENCE REACHED:** Twenty magistrates, twenty judicial police officers, and ten public school administrators participated in the training. The French Embassy is currently in the process of printing a small booklet detailing the presentations, discussions, debates, and recommendations that were made or took place during the conference. This booklet will be distributed to education personnel, magistrates, and judicial police officers in the hopes that it will serve as a handbook on how to address the problem of violence against schoolgirls and on how to investigate and prosecute such incidents.

**¶5. RESULT/IMPACT:** Excellent. During the training, the participants were exposed to several different presentations. A Beninese magistrate presented the law, both Beninese and international, as it pertains to violence against girls and children. The Director of the French school in Cotonou and several members of his staff presented French education officials cooperation with law enforcement during investigations. An experienced member of the Paris France judicial police force's Sexual Crimes Against Children's Bureau trained the Beninese judicial police on how to investigate crimes of sexual violence against girls. RLA and SLEA discussed how investigations and prosecutions of this type are handled in the United States.

¶6. NON-USG SOURCES OF IN-COUNTRY FUNDING/IN KIND SUPPORT: The activity was planned in conjunction with the Service de Coopration Internationale de Police (SCTIP) delegation at the French Embassy in Cotonou, the Cotonou Bureau of UNICEF, the NGO Plan Benin, and the Beninese Justice Ministry. Financing was split between these various donor organizations, and Benin's Minister of Justice presided over the first day's events.

¶7. QUALITY OF USG SUPPORT: Excellent. American Embassy Cotonou, INL, OPDAT, and ICITAP were all very supportive of this activity and were integral to its success. Embassy Cotonou's PAO assisted with arranging for media coverage of the event.

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